



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Template Version 2.09

Voluntary Report - Public distribution

Date: 2/20/2009

GAIN Report Number: CO9003

Colombia

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

Alleviated Procedures for Importing Mechanically Deboned Chicken Meat

2009

Approved by:

R Todd Drennan, Agricultural Counselor
U.S. Embassy

Prepared by:

Alberto Restrepo, Agricultural Specialist

Report Highlights:

The Government of Colombia, through the Institute for the Surveillance of Medicines and Food Products (INVIMA), has negotiated an agreement with food processors to address the Salmonella issue associated with imported Mechanically Deboned Chicken Meat (MDM). The agreement requires a commitment from importers and processors to meet sanitary norms to ensure the safety of the final product whether the raw MDM had Salmonella or not.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Annual Report
Bogota [CO1]
[CO]

NEW GOC PROCEDURE TO ALLEVIATE IMPORT SANITARY REQUIREMENTS ON MECHANICALLY DEBONED POULTRY MEAT (MDM)

INVIMA, the GOC's agency responsible for regulating food safety standards, announced the implementation of an agreement with meat processors that creates a procedure for importing mechanically deboned meat (MDM). The new procedure is currently in effect, but is subject to further revisions per comments made by traders, importers and INVIMA port agents. The agreement was implemented as a way to eliminate detentions and even rejections of shipments of imported MDM shipments due to findings of Salmonella. Prior to this agreement, INVIMA was enforcing a zero tolerance Salmonella policy that resulted in a number of U.S. MDM shipments being rejected and destroyed.

Under the new procedures, food processors of MDM will be able to process the meat even if the product shows signs of Salmonella as long as the product undergoes a cooking or heat-treatment process that will ensure the product is fit for human consumption. Under the agreement, the food processor will sign a document stating that it will comply with a set of pre-determined import requirements.

The document signed by the food processor is called the **Act of Commitment for the Use of Imported Raw MDM**. Under this agreement, the food processor is obligated to fulfill the following requirements:

- 1. The raw material, MDM, that tests positive for Salmonella spp. will only be used for the manufacturing of heat-treated products in such a way that food safety is assured.*
- 2. The raw material, MDM, that tests negative for Salmonella spp. can be used for the manufacturing of meat products with or without heat treatments. This condition does not preclude the appropriate food safety processing measure to guarantee the sanitary condition of the finished product.*
- 3. The processing plant where (raw) MDM is used for the production of heat or non-heat treated products has programs and other procedures related to the traceability of those products that contain (raw) MDM or those products produced with MDM.*
- 4. The processing plant has the required mechanisms, procedures, know-how and equipment to assure that products manufactured with raw MDM are free of contamination and are apt for human consumption.*
- 5. The processing plant commits to not using MDM-- either domestically produced or imported--until the corresponding results of the microbiological analyses are released, which will determine if the MDM can be used in raw or heat-treated products.*

In case the official laboratory determines based on historical performance that a shipment of MDM does not have to be sampled at the point of entry, the processing plant will not use the MDM in its manufacturing process until the corresponding laboratory analyses are conducted and the results are known, which will determine how the MDM can be used -- either in raw or heat-treated products.

- 6. The processing plant must maintain updated records and supporting documentation to demonstrate that those products produced with MDM are fit for human consumption.*
- 7. In the case that the raw material, MDM, is used by another food processor, the importer agrees to inform INVIMA located at the point of entry in writing within 10 days of the issuance of the import Sanitary Inspection Certificate the following:*

- *The destination(s) not included in the initial **Act of Commitment for the Use of Imported Raw MDM** indicating those lots that were shipped;*
- *Import Sanitary Inspection Certificate and identification numbers that correspond to the imported product.*

The authorized sanitary agency during its inspection, surveillance and control activities may request the necessary technical evidence to verify the absence of Salmonella spp. in finished products and is empowered to apply the appropriate food safety requirements to preserve national public health. End of agreement text.

The Act of Commitment for the Use of Imported Raw MDM is signed by the importer or his/her representative; the processing plant representative; and an INVIMA agent. Reportedly, Colombian MDM importers have gladly accepted the new document as it means that they can nationalize and store product in their own facilities while waiting for the results of the Salmonella lab test. This procedure should result in lower port storage fees and the ready availability of raw material since any MDM can be used even if it has Salmonella traces as long as the product is cooked. Apparently there is a food product that would use some raw MDM, but most MDM will be heat-treated eliminating any traces of Salmonella.

While Post believes that the new agreement will eliminate problems at the port, it still does not address the underlying problem with Colombia's Salmonella import standards. INVIMA and the Ministry of Social Protection still need to develop a permanent Salmonella policy that is consistent with international guidelines. INVIMA has not indicated how long the new agreement will be in force. Imports of MDM from the world in the first eight months of 2008 amounted to US\$16.5 million of which the United States provided US\$15.2 million. Local MDM production is negligible and does not meet the quality standards requested by meat processors.